



## THIS WEEK IN IRAQ

The Official Newsletter of the Multi-National Force - Iraq

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February 12, 2008

# Diary Reveals Qaeda's Decline

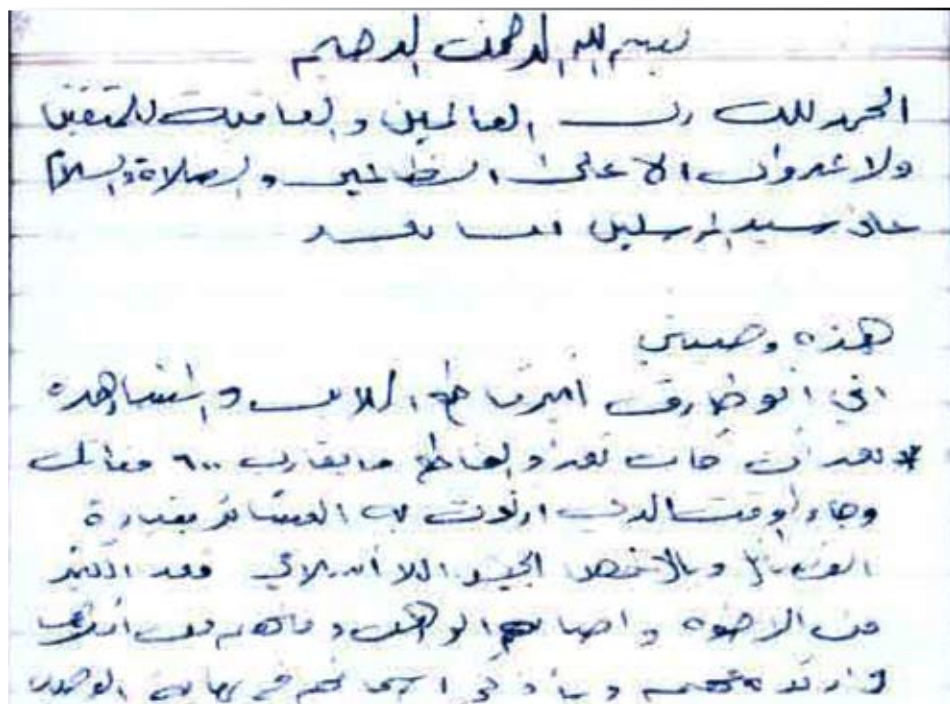
**BAGHDAD** — U.S. troops found a diary belonging to an al Qaida in Iraq leader that has Coalition forces believing the terrorist organization is “on its heels,” a senior military official in Baghdad said yesterday. Soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division’s 1st Brigade Combat Team captured a diary Nov. 3, 2007, belonging to Abu Tariq, an al Qaida emir in control of five battalions within two sectors, U.S. Air Force Col. Donald J. Bacon, a Multi-National Force - Iraq spokesman, told online journalists and “bloggers” during a conference call.

The Soldiers found the diary during a patrol conducted about 15 kilometers south of Balad. Bacon said the 16-page diary contains records about man power, operations, weapons, and finances, and it shows that al Qaida is hurting badly in the belts of Baghdad.

“There were 600 al-Qaida members in this sector, now there (are) 20 or less,” said Bacon.

In the diary, Tariq describes each battalion’s number decline and goes on to describe the 4th battalion as “scoundrels,”

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## This Week in News ...

**Soldiers Provide Aid to Orphanage**



**Soldiers Working with ‘Sons of Iraq’**



**Press Conference:** Operational Update: Rear Adm. Smith

**Reconstruction Report:** The latest from USACE

**Hot Item:** MNF-I Photo Gallery: Select Photos From Iraq

## Iraqi Air Force Keeping Watch Over Iraq

**KIRKUK** — Iraqi Muslims making their annual pilgrimage to Mecca in December were being watched. Their every movement was being carefully scrutinized and recorded by unseen men. The watchers plotted prime ambush points that would be the most dangerous to the pilgrims and made sure to note and analyze them.

The “watchers” were Iraq’s own Air Force keeping a vigilant watch over their fellow countrymen. Flying over a mile above their heads, the crowd probably didn’t even notice the Cessna Caravan circling or the impact it had on their pilgrimage. Onboard the aircraft was an aircrew

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# Security Gains Allowing Families to Return

**ZAMBRANIYAH** — Nearly 1,000 residents returned to Zambraniyah throughout the last week of January after learning the area had been secured by Coalition and Iraqi forces. When heavy fighting in the Zambraniyah area broke out in early January, Coalition Forces advised families to evacuate the area to stay out of danger.

As residents fled, blending in was difficult for al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI) members, enabling Soldiers to identify and target them. Over the course of combat operations, more than 40 extremists were killed.

The 6th Squadron, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, currently attached to 2nd BCT, 3rd Inf. Div., is now helping displaced families return to their homes.

“In the past 48 hours approximately 1,000 Zambraniyah residents have returned to their homes,” said Captain David Lively, 6-8th Cav. Regt. assistant operations officer.

Last year, AQI infiltrated Zambrani-

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Maj. Gen. Mark Hertling, commander, Multi-National Division - North, speaks through his translator to the commander of the Iraqi Army's 2nd Brigade, 4th Division, Col. Abdullah Azziz Kareem, during the second MND - North's 'United and Strong' conference.

## United and Strong Conference

**TIKRIT** — Seven Northern provincial governors and their Iraqi Security Force leadership met here Feb. 4 for the second 'United and Strong' conference facilitated by Maj. Gen. Mark Hertling, commander, Multi-National Division – North, and 1st Armored Division. The provincial governing body is being mentored by the U.S. State Department's Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Coalition forces in each Northern province. All decisions regarding security, infrastructure, and economic issues in each province are currently being made at the central government level in Baghdad.

The 'United and Strong' conferences are allowing MND - North's key military leadership to “consolidate and focus issues (which) encompass Iraq's Northern provinces (and deliver them) to Iraq's central

government,” Hertling said. “Once priorities for projects and concerns are established, they are discussed by the governing provincial leadership. (These issues will be) presented to the central government, ‘as a Northern (bloc) issue,’” Hertling continued. “This is a way we can form a united front here in the north.”

The first conference, held last month, brought Northern tribal leadership together.

“The purpose of this meeting is not to air your desires or needs to benefit your province solely,” Hertling said. He explained that Iraq's central government is inundated with issues and needs that effect 18 provinces. “It is overwhelming,” he said.

By consolidating priorities that effect

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## Freedom Journal Iraq: Video dispatches from the War on Terror



Devil Dogs in Tanks



Qaeda recruiting children



Bridging the Gap in Balad